

VISITATION-SERMON,

PREACHED IN THE CHURCH OF
ST. NICHOLAS, ROCHESTER,

On JUNE 24, 1785,

Before the REV. JOHN LAW, D. D. Archdeacon
of Rochester, and the Rest of the Clergy of that
Deanery,

ON THE INTRODUCTION OF
SUNDAY SCHOOLS.

TO WHICH IS ADDED,

A LARGE APPENDIX,

CONTAINING

Various Arguments on the Utility and Im-
portance of the Institution, and Answers to
Objections;

TOGETHER WITH

An Account of their Establishment in the Parishes
of BOUGHTON-BLEAN and HEARNHILL,
KENT.

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BLEAN, KENT, and formerly FELLOW of TRINITY
COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE.

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“ THE wonderful increase of Sunday
“ Schools during the last twelve Months,
“ the quick sale of the whole impression
“ of the following Sermon, and the re-
“ peated inquiries that have been made
“ after it since out of print, have de-
“ termined the Author to publish a se-
“ cond Edition in a size and form as little
“ chargeable as possible to those who
“ may incline to become purchasers.”

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P R E F A C E.

TH E writer of the following Discourse can attribute its flattering reception at the time of delivery to nothing but his own good fortune in having selected a Subject, which not only seemed to meet the general approbation of his Reverend Audience, but had previously (though unknown to him) employed much of their thoughts and attempts towards an extent of its practice. This coincidence of sentiments naturally operated as a prejudice in its favour, and produced that candid allowance for its demerits as a composition, which the writer is but too sensible will need apology, when thus submitted to public perusal.—However, he still hopes to screen his imperfections of this sort under the utility and importance of his subject;

which importance once admitted, a communication of whatever belongs to that point (especially during its infant-practice) cannot be too extensive. In this persuasion he ventures abroad, trusting to the favourable interpretation of his designs by all well-wishers in general to the cause of Christianity, and soliciting in particular with due deference the countenance and support of his Clerical Brethren in any schemes of parochial management, that may tend to the better observance of the Lord's Day, and to the instruction of the poor and ignorant.

ST.

ST. MATTHEW, xi. 5.

—“ THE POOR HAVE THE GOSPEL
“ PREACHED TO THEM.”

THOUGH the dispositions and views of the multitude that flocked around our blessed Saviour, were as different almost as their persons, yet did He condescend upon various occasions to satisfy their distinct interests, and to comply with their separate humours, as far as was consistent with innocence and truth. Thus to those, who followed him out of gratitude for past favours, He promised still greater on their continuance in obedience, whilst on those, who came in expectation of benefits, He graciously conferred them. There were some, who attended on purpose to hear and profit by his instructive discourses, and to these “ *never man spake like him;*” while to others, who thought to entangle Him in his talk by their artful questions, He replied in a manner arguing his own divine wisdom, and which must have convinced any hearts less obdurate than theirs. The loaves and fishes were an enticement to others; these He fed. There were also many good parents, who were eager to have their tender offspring noticed by our Lord as He passed by, (a distinction always coveted from men of eminence for their piety and virtue) and who therefore were ever ready to place their children in his way, “ *that he might*

touch them;" towards these infants He benignly stretched forth his hands and blessed them, uttering at the same time those encouraging expressions of kindness and good-will, "*Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not.*" The consequence of this attention to the peculiar exigencies, interests and passions of his followers was, that though some of his kind instructions were scattered to the wind, though some "*of his good seed fell by the way-side, on stony places or amid thorns,*" yet a great share also "*fell on good ground and brought forth fruit abundantly.*"

But there was still another description of men, who flocked around our blessed Lord in great numbers. These were the ignorant and gaping croud, who seem to judge their presence necessary wherever any thing is going forward, and who are apt to follow their leaders they know not why, they know not where, but only out of curiosity to hear or see "*something new.*" To these Christ exhibited in his own person a sight altogether new. For the Jewish Commonalty had been so long used to the vain parade and ostentation of their own Scribes and Doctors, that a preacher like our blessed Saviour without pride, a teacher of righteousness to the ignorant and foolish, must have been to them "*a novelty indeed.*" This novelty, viz. "*the preaching of the Gospel thus freely to the poor,*" our Lord was pleased to make a distinguishing sign (in his answer to John's disciples) of his being the true Messiah. The miraculous powers, which were so many other marks of his kingdom, ceased we know when that kingdom was so far established as to have no further need of them ;
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but this great characteristic remains to be exercised in all ages of the Church, to be a standing evidence of the benevolent and comprehensive principles of that Gospel, which not only pays no respect to the persons of men, but searches out the meek and lowly upon earth, as peculiar objects of its care and attention.—

“ *Hearken my beloved brethren* (says St. James “ ii, 5,) *hath not God chosen the poor of this world* “ *rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which he* “ *hath promised to them that love him?*” The poor we shall have always with us to the end of the world; to the poor therefore is the Gospel always to be preached.

What our blessed Lord himself then thus pointed out, as a peculiar sign of the authority of his own mission and of his being the promised Messiah, such of his followers as have received their commission to instruct and to preach in his name, cannot but listen to with respect and deference: consequently there can need little apology (I trust) to the present Audience, for wishing to engage their attention in behalf of the religious concerns of our poor and ignorant brethren.

It would be trifling and impertinent to consume much of the present time in tracing at large the good influence of education in general, and of an early religious education in particular; since those before whom I speak must be so well satisfied both from personal and professional experience of its boundless utility. But however we may inculcate the benefits and necessity of early instilling virtuous principles and habits, yet we must all of us be too sensible of the deaf ear that is turned on all our good ad-

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vice on this head, and of the evils resulting from its so frequent neglect. For from whence has dissipation and vice found the means of spreading its baneful influence so far and wide, but from the want of care and skill in opening the bud of reason? from whence has profaneness and infidelity ventured to stalk with gigantic stride through the land, but from the failure of an early moral and religious culture?

When through a neglect of instilling better principles, a contempt of serious thoughts and virtuous impressions is suffered to take possession of the mind, is permitted to infuse its spreading poison, and to grow up with the years and stature of the body, no wonder that the promoters of virtue both by profession and practice have little attention paid them, no wonder that their persons are so frequently despised, and that all their insinuations of the importance and beauty of holiness are treated with contempt and scorn. "*What have I to do with thee? I know not whence thou art,*" is the mildest reply of the Sceptic and Infidel of riper years, who has never been accustomed to listen to the voice of the moral and religious preacher in his earlier days:—if the Master be called Beelzebub, how can his followers and servants expect a better appellation.

When the good old Simeon was blessed with the sight of the infant Jesus, when he held him in his arms, full of holy joy and rapture, he broke forth (amid his own personal gratitude for being permitted to live to see that day) into prophetic declarations of what would follow the birth of Christ. "*Behold* (says he to the virgin Mary, St. Luke ii, 34) "*this child is set for the*
"*fall*"

“*fall and rising again of many in Israel, and for a sign that shall be spoken against; that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*” For a sign that shall be spoken against—we need but repeat the words to be sensible, that they are now as well as have been heretofore in a state of most visible accomplishment. This child appointed by God to be the author of peace and good-will towards men, and his doctrines to be the standard of true religion, is become a stumbling block of offence to many, is reviled and blasphemed and his precepts set at nought; so that in these our days the matter lies not so much in adjusting the speculative opinions of the different sects of Christians, as in maintaining the truth of Christianity itself against the monstrous growth of vice and infidelity. But some good may be drawn from the worst of evils, when under the management of a well-disposed mind: “*The thoughts of all hearts will by these means be revealed.*” The indifference and lukewarmness of some, the total desertion of others will become visible, and thus the sincerity of all be tried, that “the remnant of the faithful” may be disclosed.

As to support, encourage and increase this remnant is “*our*” peculiar and important province, so neither ought we to despond in its execution, though surrounded with many difficulties. “*Though an host of men, (says the Psalmist, xxvii, 3) were encamped against me, yet shall not my heart be afraid; and, though there rose up war against me, yet will I put my trust in Him.*” Our warfare is assuredly not only commenced, but already carried on to a dreadful extremity; not indeed in the shape of imprisonments,

prisonments, fines, tortures and burnings for the name of Christ, but in setting at nought our profession and persons as below much notice, and pointing all the shafts of ridicule, contempt and scorn on our Lord and Master himself and all his holy doctrines. Never therefore was there more occasion than at present for putting on the whole armour of Christ, that we may be enabled to support the spiritual conflict; never was there more necessity of standing forth with boldness and confidence, and of shewing ourselves zealously affected in a good and righteous cause. The integrity and purity of our own personal characters, together with the disinterested pains we are seen to take in promoting virtuous and religious habits in others, could not fail of being both proofs to others of our own sincerity, and of doing much good even amidst "*a sinful and adulterous generation.*" These are our true shields of defence, which will blunt the keen edge of many an offensive weapon that is thrown against ourselves and our holy religion.

It would ill become one of so private and insignificant a character as myself to touch upon the former point; it is a matter of conscience to each individual, to be adjudged by conscience alone, and to conscious feelings therefore be it now wholly referred. But as to the latter, we may and always ought to be ready to communicate with one another on any probable schemes for a reformation of manners, on any new plans of parochial management, that may seem to promise any good; especially on such as may tend to the improvement of virtuous habits among the poor and ignorant, and to the better observation of the Lord's Day, whose profana-
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tion by all ranks of people is become so truly grievous. As a matter of communication alone then shall I presume to dwell on what follows; happy not to be deemed an impertinent intruder into the concerns of my brethren; happier still, if they should think favourably of what I may advance; but most fortunate of all, if any one should be induced to give me the sanction of his own example, in a matter which I have been enabled to accomplish in my own place of residence* with much prospect of success; I mean the introduction of "*Sunday Schools*" for the instruction of the poor and ignorant.

It has been judiciously remarked †, that the great error of the Romish Missionaries in the East, and which occasioned at last their ejection from every country they entered was, "*their application to the Princes of every nation rather than to the People.*" They falsely concluded, that the conversion of the prince comprehended that of the people; and therefore (captivated also by the splendor of a royal name) their whole efforts were pointed at this single object. The consequence was what might naturally be expected, the protection of the prince continued no longer than his own whim or passion directed him, and the moment this changed, there was a party ready formed by their rivals in court favour to effect the ruin of their cause. Whereas had the application been first made, where Christ and his Apostles made it, "*to the body of the people, to the poor and ignorant;*"

* Boughton Blean.

† See Dr. Vincent's Sermon preached in Saint Paul's, 1784, at the yearly meeting of the London Charity Schools.

rant ;” had those of humble station once been taught (as the precepts of Christianity certainly do teach them) to be better subjects, better citizens and better men, the superior ranks must have proceeded for their own interest from mere sufferance to approbation and protection, and at length possibly to a participation themselves of what they were convinced by experience had so good an effect on others. The progress indeed by these means would have been very gradual, almost insensible for a time, but would have made its own silent way by building on a firm foundation, till at last it reached the courts and palaces of the mighty upon earth ; which was actually the case with respect to the establishment of the Christian religion in the Roman empire.

Now though our lot is fallen in a fairer land, and we possess a more goodly heritage ; though we are not Missionaries in wild and savage countries, and consequently enjoy a number of advantages and blessings with regard to the practice of our professional duty, which they cannot experience, who undertake so laborious and dangerous an office, yet we may gain instruction sometimes for our conduct at home by an avoidance of such errors as have occasioned their frequent failure abroad. We are all “sent” into our different parishes for the same purposes as foreign Missionaries, viz. to promote the belief and practice of the Christian Religion to the utmost of our power. In consequence of which we aim perhaps with the most disinterested and pious views at introducing more regularity into the behaviour of the rich and powerful amongst us. This plan we pursue

sue under the notion that their better conduct would have a mighty influence on the manners of their inferior neighbours; and so far we judge right, because their ill conduct serves greatly to disseminate vice. But if this influence over the behaviour of the inferior arises (as it too often does) from views of interest alone, it ceases of course when that interest ceases, or changes of course (like the Eastern princes above) with the caprice of the principal: whereas conviction of the heart abideth for ever.

Besides, we all know the difficulties we have to encounter, when we would endeavour to persuade our superiors in all outward circumstances of life to alter their modes of living on our representation. Even in a mind not much averse in itself to the cause of virtue and religion, the prejudices of education, the habits of company, the delirium of fashion are often so strongly rivetted, as to render the service desperate in which we may think it our duty nevertheless to engage.

By others, who have long bid adieu to all moral impressions, we are deemed impertinent and troublesome and officious intruders, are told that religion is only fit for illiberal and vulgar minds, and are therefore bid to attend to our own concerns without interfering in their habits of life—"for who made thee (say they) a ruler and a judge over us?" Where this is the case, it were most prudent perhaps to follow their advice, to let them alone among whom we are likely to do so little good, and to turn to our other concerns amid those, who may perhaps be so illiberal and vulgar-minded, as

to think they have a moral duty to perform and a God to serve. It were most adviseable, I say, to act thus; being content with exhibiting at the same time in our own conduct a bright example to them of the doctrines we preach, and with neglecting no deference or attention that can innocently be paid to their superior rank, but cautiously avoiding all personal countenance or compliance with such of their irregularities and vices, as would but further degrade us even in their eyes, as well as prevent our walking blamelessly in the sight of those committed to our charge.

But if we turn our thoughts and attentions to the worldly and spiritual interests of a lower class of our Christian brethren, there seems much greater probability of eventual success. Here, as in the first instance, we have fewer prejudices and difficulties to encounter, so are we placed in that very situation, which is of all others most favourable to our good wishes and designs. The poor (more especially in country places) are naturally disposed "*to look up*" to their Minister for his assistance and advice on all occasions, and to be dissatisfied if they receive it not at his hands. The poor are entitled in a peculiar manner "*to have the Gospel preached unto them,*" it being one of the characteristics of Christ's kingdom that it should be so: and though they may not always profit by the same, yet they are, generally speaking, found to listen with more attention than their betters. This was the case in our Saviour's time also; "*the common people (we read) heard him gladly, while the rich and powerful accused him of blasphemy, and sought to entangle him in*" his

"*his talk.*" And if the poor are accused of being thoughtless and vicious to a great degree (though not more so surely than those of higher rank) yet does it often proceed from the total ignorance in which they have been brought up: hence many times, and hence alone, their habits of idleness and profaneness, and their neglect of all religious duties. They frequently know no better; an excuse their richer neighbours have not always to plead. But who should have taught them better? Their parents and friends perhaps were not able. The royal Psalmist makes answer for us "*when my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord taketh me up.*" (Psalm 27, 12.) Such then as are appointed to perform all good offices in the name of the Lord, should take up the cause of the helpless and indigent, and should strive to promote their wholesome instruction. Thus would the state of civilization as well as of religion be advanced in the nation, and they would deserve well of the public in general, who endeavoured to dispel the thick clouds of ignorance, and to train up the most numerous, and perhaps useful members of the community in the paths of industry and virtue.

But if we find ourselves (for I cannot help making the application) unable to convert many of the vicious and unbelieving of riper years among the poor, we may strengthen at least the faith and encourage the good practice of those, who wish not to swerve from their duty, we may attempt to raise a stock of good Christians amid the rising generation. Now a comprehensive method has been devised of furnishing means of instruction for the younger and poorer

part of a parish, which seems to be gaining daily ground, and promises to be productive of much good effect, if carefully followed up. The institution alluded to is that of "*Sunday Schools*," which are already established in many places. The points aimed at in their introduction are, "*to furnish opportunities of instruction to the children of the poor, without interfering with any weekly industry; to infuse into the tender minds of infancy ideas of decency, sobriety and industry; to inure them to early habits of regularity in their attendance at Church, and to teach them how to spend the leisure hours of Sunday to their own improvement, advantage and happiness, which are now almost universally consumed in idleness, profanation and riot.*"

Such is the outline of this benevolent plan; its interior regulations, extent and management must depend on the situation, abilities and charitable dispositions of those parishes, who may be inclined to adopt such a scheme of Christian improvement. I scruple not to call it an act of Christian benevolence, since its advantages are both obvious and numerous; too numerous to be recounted on the present occasion, too obvious to meet illustration before the present Audience.* No one surely can object to its principle, except he be either some sullen promoter of dark and gross ignorance in the lower class of people, to serve the purposes of ambition, superstition and slavery, or some refined philosopher of modern days, who with a degree of fastidious delicacy affects to consider all infant instruction in no better a light

* See these advantages stated at large in the Appendix.

light than as the parent of prejudice and mental subjection. But to give an early bias in the cause of virtue, together with all the advantages of first possession, of habit and custom, is what the best judges of human nature (independent of religious and Christian considerations) have approved and insisted on, as the best means of promoting all the substantial and civil interests of a State, as well as of *“that righteousness, which alone exalteth a nation.”* The humane Howard in his observations on the state of foreign prisons furnishes us with a remark much to our present purpose; *“that the reason of there being so few felons in many prisons in Switzerland is to be sought, not in the severity of the penal laws or in the frequency of executions, but in the great care that is taken in those cantons to give children, even the poorest, a moral and religious education:”* so beneficial is early instruction, and so much more important is it to the Community to *“prevent”* than to *“punish”* crimes. To enlarge on this obvious truth would be to trifle away time; let us rather proceed to the pleasant task of reviewing its advantageous practice in the institution of Sunday Schools.

The first circumstance that gave rise to the idea of these infant nurseries of instruction, was the concern it gave to all serious persons to see the trifling, indecent and irreligious behaviour of so many of the poorer sort both old and young on the Lord's Day. The profanation of the Sabbath (we know) has been lamented at the execution of the law's last dreadful sentence by many a penitent thief and murderer, as the first step and principal leader to that career of intoxication, debauchery and vice, which at

length terminated in so shameful and ignominious an exit. But these humane and considerate persons were very sensible that these idle and irreligious practices on the Lord's Day originated in numbers from their extreme ignorance alone and want of better advice. They therefore set themselves to find a remedy, which though perhaps incapable of healing the whole disease, might yet abate much of its malignant humour. They knew that the labour of endeavouring to stop the torrent of ingrafted and habitual vice was difficult and disheartening, that to recall the inveterate practitioner from his beaten track of irregularity and impiety was a desperate and almost impracticable attempt. The Prophet's questions then presented themselves to their view—" *Whom shall we teach knowledge? whom shall we make to understand doctrine?*"—and the Prophet's answers were complete and satisfactory;—" *even him that is weaned from the milk and drawn from the breasts: for here precept may be given upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little,*" as opportunity serves and the infant capacity opens. Here a foundation may be laid on a wide and firm basis, not so much indeed for remedying the present evil with respect to those who are advanced in years of ignorance, inattention and vice, as for preventing its further growth and divulcation amid the rising generation. By a close application (argued these true promoters of the cause of Christianity) to the improvement of these ignorant and unadvised children, by setting on foot little seminaries on a Sunday for the instruction of many, who may be employed in manual industry on a week-day, we may

may be able with God's blessing to do some good, even to draw so many little Moseses (as it were) out of the waters of destruction; and though we cannot educate them, as Pharaoh's daughter did him, in all the wisdom and learning of Egypt, yet we may do what is still better for their purpose—teach them to be sober and industrious members of society in their humble callings, and instruct them in all the plain and saving knowledge of Christ.—Thus argued (as we may suppose) those benevolent citizens of Gloucester, who have the honour of taking the lead in these Christian institutions.

If then to assist the poor and needy in the education of their children be an act of Christian charity; if the gift of food and raiment wears away, but the nourishment of the soul (when properly applied) endures for ever; if to prevent the growth of idleness and vice by inculcating early habits of industry, sobriety and virtue be a matter of the first importance, not only to the children themselves, but to the neighbourhood in general, where they are situated; if a religious observance of the Lord's Day be a serious concern in a Christian land; if lastly a good deed be a proper employment for a good day, then we may confidently pronounce, that Sunday Schools are laudable institutions and worthy of all encouragement.

With respect to their good and lasting effects on the morals of those, who may be brought up in them, it is time alone that can determine on their general utility. Where they have been introduced long enough to make the observation, their practical good consequences have been

been declared to be very visible; where they are of a later date, they are said to promise very fair. We ought not therefore to be too quickly disheartened at any rubs we may meet with in the prosecution of such a design, nor expect to find immediate good consequences in a matter that regards a gradual improvement and a distant completion. The principle of their institution being confessedly good, the trial must be made in patience and perseverance, and the final issue recommended in our prayers to the protection and blessing of Almighty God.

A P P E N D I X.

THE Author was not willing to make any addition to the Discourse itself, but to publish it exactly as delivered from the pulpit. But as it was then solely calculated to engage the attention of a "*Clerical Audience*," it appeared needless to enlarge on many points relative to the good effects of infant instruction in general, and to the utility and importance of these little seminaries in particular. These are points however which deserve a fuller discussion now the subject is submitted to public consideration; and therefore they shall find a place in what follows—

It was sarcastically said by Augustus concerning King Herod, "*I had rather be his hog than his son.*" The murder of Antipater by his own father Herod, together with a sting at the Jewish prohibition of eating swine's flesh, occasioned

casioned the above severe speech. But is it not also fairly applicable to all neglectful parents? Better, indeed, is it to be some people's swine, or dogs, or horses than their children; since they take all imaginable care to rear the former to their respective uses, while to make honest men and good Christians of the latter scarce seems to employ a thought. Children are endowed with natural reason, and have souls capable of everlasting happiness, or liable to eternal misery; but for want of parents or friends to instruct them early in the road to the former, they are almost unavoidably led into courses that directly tend to the latter. It is to meet with such void and uncultivated soils as these, that "*the Devil goeth about like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.*" In short, what can be more deplorable than the condition of that poor child, whose parents either through ignorance, vice or inability, give him no instruction? Infancy and childhood are the proper seasons of instilling principles of all kinds, and therefore ought more especially to be filled up with such as are good and virtuous. The soul is at that age most receptive and pliable, and in consequence most fit for instruction. There exist then no impediments, no prejudices to hinder the access of divine truths, there are few lusts or prepossessions to stand in the way, and to dispute their passage into the mind. Children are, for the most part, like moist and soft clay in the hands of the potter, apt and easy to be moulded into any shape at the will of the workman; but if neglected when of this due temperament, they soon become hardened and lose all their ductility. If men, according to

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our Saviour's own words, must be brought into an "*infant-like*" state of mind before they can profit by divine instruction, then are infants themselves most capable of receiving it; and therefore this capacity and fitness of theirs ought to be duly cultivated and improved with the utmost care and diligence. When through want of early instruction the mind is once suffered to grow callous in ignorance and vice, it is well known how difficult and disheartening the task is, to endeavour to stop the torrent of such habitual wickedness, and to recall an old practitioner from his beaten track of profaneness and impiety, into the paths of sobriety, industry, and virtue. If a reformation is attempted among those of advancing years, how shall one teach them knowledge who are grown old in ignorance? How shall one reclaim the grey-headed in sin? Though a man should speak with the wisdom of an Apostle, or with the tongue of an Angel, yet inveterate habits would even thus be scarce broken through, or the strong prejudices of ignorance and stupidity even thus be conquered. Though he be ever so diligent in informing those, who are grown old in iniquity and ignorance, that such and such things are written in the book of God; though he read to them portions of Scripture levelled at their peculiar vices, yet all this amounts not to their being able to see it, as it is written, with their own eyes, and to read for themselves God's dreadful denunciations against the hardened sinner, and his gracious promises of forgiveness to the returning one. If he wish to set before such the duty of bringing up their children in the fear and nurture of the Lord,

Lord, alas it is a very little way they can proceed in such a work ! for how can they instruct others, who have been bred up in perfect ignorance themselves ? or what can they teach their children, who themselves know nothing ? Such parents are not able to give good gifts unto their children ; for according to the wise man's saying, (Eccles. xxv. 3.) "*what can he expect to find in his age (that he may give to others) who hath gathered nothing for himself in his youth ?*" If he would fain persuade them to spend the Lord's Day in a religious manner, how shall he set about it ? For let us make the best of the case, and suppose (though the contrary is too generally true) that one, who has been bred in total ignorance, goes constantly to Church, yet that employs a very small portion of the Sunday. What then is to be done with the rest. There is an easy answer for him, who is capable of receiving it, "*read what is improving to yourself, and instruct your family at home.*" But what can that person do to whom the very shape of letters is unknown ? He can neither employ the leisure hours of Sunday with profit to himself nor others. We know what is the too frequent consequence of such inability, that such an helpless "*ignorant*" at the best, but loiters away the precious hours of that day, without knowing whither to go, or what to do with himself at home, and therefore it is well if he has prudence and forbearance enough not to go whither he ought not, and to spend the earnings of his weekly labour in improper places. Thus the day of the Lord is not barely consumed in total idleness, but being stained in its course by all manner

manner of profaneness, terminates, at length, in scenes of drunkenness and debauchery. This is dreadful to think on—would to God it were not too true ! Humanity therefore loudly calls on all, who are able, to espouse the cause of poor and ignorant children, and to endeavour to imprint on their minds ideas of goodness and virtue “ *while they are children,*” that they may not become hardened sinners at a later period of life.

Now many reasons may be assigned for referring this general outline of instruction to Sunday in particular, though by no means to the exclusion of any weekly improvement, where there is opportunity and ability to procure it ; and where any one has the means without hurting himself or family, and also the inclination to put one child or more of the poorer class to be regularly instructed during the whole week, it is certainly performing a most humane, charitable, and praise-worthy action. But the uninstructed children, in many parishes, are by far too numerous to be all taken care of in this complete manner ; and therefore the present mode has been adopted for this amid other reasons, viz. “ *to render its utility as extensive as possible.*” For, by appropriating the charitable fund, where it may be possible to raise one, to the use of Sunday alone, numbers may be comprehended, even perhaps all the poor children of a place, who stand in need of such assistance, whereas a very few only could be benefited at the same expence for the whole week.

Again, Sunday being a day of rest from all manual labour, we are the more at liberty to employ

employ it in the opening of the understanding and improvement of the heart, which is the proper business of the day.

Another benefit of Sunday Schools arises from collecting a number of young people together, who will be inured by these means to early and regular habits of attendance on God's worship. This alone would be a very desirable and important circumstance in their favour, were there no other, as we know full well, from sad experience, that those among the poorer sort especially, who are not brought up in the good habit of going to Church, seldom acquire it in any great degree afterwards. For they never know when nor how to begin a good practice, to which they have not been accustomed, but to the neglect of which, as it leads them into every idle and vicious habit, they so frequently owe their utter destruction.

Will it not also be of the utmost advantage to the children themselves (as well as to the general interests of virtue and religion) to be kept thus employed on the leisure hours of Sunday in an useful and exemplary manner? If we have been frequently hurt at the idle and profane behaviour too visible on the Lord's Day among the younger inhabitants of a place, by as many children as can be collected together under the inspection of a careful and attentive person, by so many is the vagrant number lessened, so many are taken for the time out of harm's way, so many are prevented during the hours of attendance from engaging in idle pastimes, from using indecent and profane language, from being impertinent, impudent, and vicious in their words and actions. Were they to be kept in this negative state only, and out

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of the power of being corrupted by bad example, the benefit would be great ; but it is hoped and designed to go much further, even to the advancement, in due time, of positive goodness and virtue. The hours of the Lord's Day, in which these young persons are secluded from evil doing, are to be employed in forwarding their well-doing. By being taught to read, they will know how to fill up many a vacant hour to advantage on future Sundays, when arrived at a state of manhood, and will also have it in their power to improve their own children, who may not, perhaps, enjoy the opportunities of instruction. They will be taught the plainest duties of the Christian religion, with a particular regard to what concerns their humble station in life, and by the performance of which (as it will be instilled into them) they will most effectually consult their own ease, prosperity, and happiness.

The boorish stupidity of those of the poorer class, who have never had the least intercourse with their betters, together with their failure in every decent mark of respect to their superiors, is well known to all, who have been conversant with their characters ; neither is it at all surprising. For, where the poor find themselves totally neglected by those above them, and are, consequently, in little hopes of receiving their favours, they want a spur to set them forwards, an encouragement to put on their best appearances, by way of ingratiating themselves into the notice of others. But the case becomes wonderfully altered, where their richer neighbours condescend to treat them with some degree of attention, to enter into their concerns, and to alleviate their situation

as far as possible. When their "*interests*," begin to be touched, the poor then (as well as their betters under like circumstances) soon learn to exhibit all due marks of civility in their power; they then begin to strive and vie with each other in respectful behaviour. Hence arises another benefit of Sunday Schools, especially as they comprehend such numbers. For, by drawing the children of the poor out of their obscurity into notice and protection, they tend to humanize a race of beings, who, when left totally to themselves, seem little superior to the beasts they drive.

But at the same time that the rough manners of these poor children are polishing to a certain degree, by their introduction into the presence and countenance of their superiors, a door is proportionably opening (since these two points go hand in hand) for the admission of every important and necessary truth, for the practice of every plain and useful virtue. Herein, therefore, the utility of Sunday Schools is very conspicuous. For, let us suppose a Clergyman ever so desirous of instructing the poor and ignorant from the Pulpit, it is a great chance whether many of that sort, or their children, are often to be seen at church: they therefore put themselves out of the way of "*public*" advice and instruction. Little good then can be expected in this way; since those who need the advice most, are never at hand to receive it. But by collecting a number of poor children together in a private room, or school, he has wonderful opportunities of opening their understandings, and of improving their hearts. In his occasional visits to the Schools, he is looked up to with a degree of attention and respect,

and whatever he says is listened to with eagerness. The children shew a satisfaction and pleasure in his commendations, as well as a shame under his discountenance and censures. Being not before a mixed multitude, he can adapt every thing he speaks to the peculiar exigencies and capacities of his young flock, and can explain their duty to them by word of mouth, as occasion dictates, which is always better understood by such children, and makes a deeper impression than any other method of instruction. The little Tracts, likewise, on moral and religious duties, which the children carry home with them to be read by their parents or others, during the course of the week, and which are returned on the following Sundays to be exchanged for others, is a kind of silent and continual preaching, from house to house, on the most plain and familiar duties of common life.

Such then are the general advantages of Sunday Schools, on which we have a right to build good hopes of success in due time, provided these institutions are closely followed up and discreetly managed. One point more must not be overlooked, whose gradual accomplishment (were they suffered to take a pretty general effect) would be of the utmost importance to the community at large, and which might lead those, who have not higher motives in view, or who have little or no sense of religion themselves, to encourage their institution. The increase of the Poor, and in consequence of Rates necessary for their support, is become a matter of most serious concern. But why do the Poor increase so fast? why do so many young and able men apply for relief, as being starving, and out of all employ? why are so many young families left

left to parish support, but because their parents are idle, drunken, vicious, and will not, when they might, get into regular and constant work. It is true, indeed, that in many parts of this county (and perhaps elsewhere) there has of late been a real failure of employment for labourers, owing to inclement seasons and scanty crops; so that many industrious people were reduced to extremities, and compelled to apply for relief without any fault of their own. This, however, acts only as a partial cause for the increase of Poor, and it is to be hoped will be only a temporary one. But no one can deny, that a more general source of their numbers is to be looked for in their habits of idleness and vice. Now it is frequently said, "*that the poor in workhouses, and those who want relief, ought to be employed, and to be made to earn something towards their own support.*" They certainly should. But is it not striking still deeper at the root of the evil complained of, if we endeavour to instil into the poorer sort, while young, such ideas and principles as shall make them ever sensible of the obligations they lie under to provide all they can for themselves and families, as shall make them ashamed to apply for any relief, but when under the pressure of real and unmerited sufferings? as shall make them ever desirous and ready to employ themselves abroad, and consequently not want employment in a Parish-house? But these are the very designs and purposes of Sunday Schools, viz. earnestly to inculcate the good cause of honesty, sobriety, and industry. These are principles, which, wherever they are followed up by practice, lay an excellent foundation to hope for a gradual diminution, in due time, of these heavy burdens,

and that by a method of all others the most desirable and effectual, viz. by a diminution of the number of paupers themselves.

But that we may not be accused of arguing altogether on one side of the question, let us attend to every shadow of an objection that can be made on the other. "*What good (perhaps it may be urged) can you expect to do by one day's instruction in a week? will not your young scholar forget every thing, and learn more harm in the week than you can teach him good on a Sunday?*" This is certainly an objection of little force when made so generally. No doubt there will be failures in the desired effects of this as well as of many other good designs. But how shall the proportion of good or evil be known without a trial? Or why should those, who are well inclined to receive instruction and advice, be excluded from its benefits, because others less worthy will continue obstinate in their ignorance and error? And as to want of time for instruction, it is well known, that there is ample leisure on one day (on Sunday especially) to hear and to learn more than there is time or inclination to practise during the other six. Besides, the proper employment of the Sunday in habits of regularity and decency is what forms the primary object of these schools. As to improvement in reading (to which these objectors principally refer) suffice it to observe, that where the dispositions of the children are in the least tractable and docile, and the parents themselves considerate in the weekly management of their families, so as to forward the views of their benefactors, all the reading and learning, that is essential or desirable, may be easily acquired. Why then wish to refuse any one

one the opportunity of doing "*some good*," because perhaps he cannot accomplish "*all*" he may wish? It was never the design of any promoter of these schools to preclude weekly instruction, but where circumstances permit, to co-operate with it; where they do not, to be a substitute for it. The husbandman who should think it useless to cultivate the seventh portion of his land, because by some untoward accident he was hindered from doing the same by the rest, would be highly and justly censurable for such negligence. If then there should be neither opportunity nor ability to keep children in proper order for seven days together, must one therefore be prevented from doing it for one day in seven? The seventh part of a young person's life is too large a portion to be wholly neglected; since if properly cultivated it would not only produce rich seed in itself, but scatter its good fruits through every other part.

It is further objected by some few persons, "*that there is no use in instructing the children of the poor at all; better let it alone; it only tends to take them off from an early application to industry, and is frequently apt to set them in some measure above themselves.*"

As to taking them off from manual industry the objection is obviated in "*Sunday*" Schools. Instruction indeed should never exclude industry among the poorer sort, but should go hand in hand with it; and then it may be affirmed with some degree of confidence, "*that the one will ever encourage and improve the other,*" and an appeal may be made to the experience of all masters, whether the servants and labourers they employ are not usually speaking more dissolute,

lute, headstrong and ungovernable the more ignorant they are? In proportion therefore as the rank weeds of ignorance may be rooted out, there will be room to sow the good seeds of sobriety, industry and docility in their stead, not without the pleasing prospect of a rich and plentiful harvest.

But surely it must be a mistaken notion in general, to think that the poor can be hurt by instruction. For if the very few instances these objectors might be able to quote were searched to the bottom, it would plainly appear, that they arose not from the circumstance of such young persons having been put in the way of instruction, but from their own idle and untoward dispositions, who would not convert it to its true end and purpose. For how can lessons of humility tend to set any persons above themselves? How can teaching them to be respectful and grateful to their benefactors make them impertinent and saucy? How can the instilling into them the heinous nature of sin, and striving to root it out of their constitution, incline them the more to commit it? Does deterring them by the severest threatenings from lying and stealing rather incline them to do both? Does advising them to be industrious by every possible argument that concerns their own interest, cause them to be idle? Surely no considerate person can say or think thus, nor can any one, who has a true sense of religion, or a thorough knowledge of the design of all schools of charity, object to their encouragement, tho' they should not in all instances answer their proposed end? But this is entering on another objection, comprehending Sunday schools together with other schools of charity.

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For it is sometimes further urged, “ *that allowing instruction to be profitable in itself to poor people, yet what good do we see often arise from schools of charity? what numbers turn out ill, who have been educated in them?*” This may be too true: but what good thing in the world does at all times and in all cases answer all the good purposes of its institution? What method of education in particular, though ever so well contrived, is sufficient always to accomplish its end? Do our own children, how carefully and discreetly soever managed, always prove so good as we could wish? Happy indeed would be the man “ *who had his quiver full of them,*” were this always the case. But how often does the contrary happen! how often do we see the best of parents in better stations fail in their expectations of this sort! how often do we see their children rebel against them, transgress their lawful authority, cast all their good admonitions behind them, and in spite of every thing that can be done for them rush headlong into ruin and destruction! Since such is often the case, what right have we to expect a greater proportion of good to arise from schools of charity than we daily see from schools of affluence? or what reason have we to think worse of the former than of the latter; there must always be a mixture of good and evil character in both, for which it would be unjust to censure the plan of education itself, or to think that regularity and good instruction can possibly of itself tend to produce any thing but what is good.

Arguments thus stated in behalf of Sunday Schools and objections (such as they are) answered, suffer the author to diverge a little from his immediate point, and to draw the attention
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of his reader (for the purpose of emulation) towards those noble plans of infant instruction and support for the poor and ignorant, which the Metropolis exhibits to our view. What rare instances of this kind of benevolence are to be found there ! The many illustrious foundations of this sort are an honour and ornament to the Nation in general ; a species of charity which perhaps has hitherto contributed "*to cover the multitude of its sins.*" We know the nature of sanctuaries and privileged places in the days of ignorance and idol worship, viz. that they were a refuge and protection to notorious offenders and abandoned profligates, and that the proverbial saying, "*ad Asylum confugere*" was not very honourable to the persons who made use of it. But our *Christian Asylum* speaks a very different language. "*I open my gates as an house of refuge to the forlorn orphan, to stand in the place of parents and friends, to protect, maintain and educate such in all Christian knowledge.*"

Again, "*to expose infants*" was an approved but barbarous custom in many ancient kingdoms ; but "*Come unto me, all ye Foundlings of mean and uncertain parentage, and I will feed, clothe and instruct you*"—says the very extensive and humane institution bearing that name.

What a truly royal and religious foundation is Christ's Hospital ! where near a thousand children of indigent parents receive their daily sustenance, their temporal and spiritual improvement, where all as they advance forward are not sent into the world in one and the same beaten track, but are disposed of according to their particular turn of mind and to the improvements they have made, for which reason this illustrious

illustrious house of charity has produced many ornaments to itself and to the nation in various walks of life.

Another most honourable spectacle must not go without a mention ; this is the annual sight of between five and six thousand children collected under one roof. If we ask "*whose are all these ?*" the reply is ready ; *we are the children of benevolence ; we are all brought up by charity in our respective parishes ; we are all met together under this sacred Dome to lift up our voices unto God and to praise him for his goodness ; to pray for his choicest blessings on the heads of our generous benefactors, by whose bounty we are thus maintained and instructed.*" This annual meeting of all the Charity Schools belonging to the Metropolis in St. Paul's Cathedral is one of the most sublime and affecting sights that can be conceived. Who can view so many thousand innocents rescued thus (if not their own fault) from ignorance and wickedness and not be moved ? who can hear them raising their united voices in one grand choral hymn of gratitude to their Maker without an elated heart and overflowing eye ?

By the numbers * of children who are thus educated, not only in the Metropolis but throughout the whole kingdom, by the daily additions that are making through the extensive plan

* The number of children educated in Charity Schools in London amounts to upwards of 6000 ; in other counties of England to above 23,000 ; in Scotland to near 8000.—Our own county is said to have 62 schools and near 1300 children in them. See Society's Account (for propagating Christian Knowledge) 1784.—" At the moment in which I am speaking (says the Dean of Canterbury in his Sermon on " Sunday Schools, preached December 18, 1785, and since " published) not less than 100,000 pupils are said to be in " training at Sunday Schools,"—and the number of those Schools has increased prodigiously since that time.

plan and increase of Sunday Schools, even to the triumphal song of thousands and tens of thousands, a stranger to our laws might be inclined to think, that our Legislature had adopted the Spartan mode of educating "*all children*" at the expence of the Public. But he ought to be told, that the voluntary benevolence of the Nation had much improved that rigid code; since we do not seek to break the bonds of natural affection by tearing away every child from his anxious parent, but only wish to open many charitable endowments for the relief of the ignorant and necessitous parent, that "*his child*" also may not want the conveniences and improvements of life: nor do we confine his education (like Spartan Schools) to inculcating the ideas of a rough and hardened soldier, but fit him rather for employments of peace and the exercise of mutual forgiveness; wishing to unite labour and industry with useful instruction, to teach him sobriety, temperance and patience, to humanize his heart, and fill it with all the mild and social virtues of Christianity.

Let emulation then spur us on in our respective districts "*to go and do likewise.*" Let reflection make us sensible, that the Gospel itself and all its glorious privileges are not confined to the rich and noble, but relate indifferently to all ranks and degrees of men, and to all children of what birth or fortune soever. All have souls equally capable of salvation; all are equally obliged to aim at and endeavour after it in the best manner they are able under the same penalties of neglect. But "*how shall all do it*"—is a question fit to be asked on this occasion, seeing all have not the same opportunities of coming at the knowledge of Christ and his religion

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utmost of our power. Let us reflect on our blessed Saviour's treatment of poor children, on his humanity and tenderness towards them when they were brought into his presence ; *" how He " blamed those that would have kept them from " Him; how He exhorted all men to follow their " innocency ; how He took them up in his arms, " laid his hands upon them and blessed them."* And though we cannot bless them in the manner He did, yet let us at all times be ready to extend our hearts towards them in all acts of benevolence, particularly in that of procuring them some seeds of good and wholesome education, from whence numberless blessings will flow to themselves and others, to private families, and to the Public in general.

N. B. As the author had many applications from the Clergy of Rochester and others, after the delivery of the foregoing Sermon, for a full and particular account of the methods he took to establish the Schools in Boughton-Blean and Hearnhill parishes, and likewise for his Plan and Regulations of the same, he takes the liberty of subjoining the following letter, which was lately written to his brother Mr. Moore, of North Cray, and contains the desired information.

Dear Brother,

I AM happy to comply with your request of giving you every information relative to the establishment of Sunday Schools in my own Parish of Boughton, and in my Curacy of Hearnhill ; and from which I have every reason to hope for success that so short a trial can justify. The profanation of Sunday by its employment *" in every way but the right one"* has given you (I am confident) as much concern as it has me. Too many of the high in station
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treat the day and all its services with a sovereign contempt; while those of middle rank employ it either in settling their worldly accounts, or in forming such engagements as constantly interfere with their regular attendance at Church, and the poorer sort consume it for the most part in common pastimes and diversions, if not in drunkenness and debauchery. The disorder is daily getting ground, nor is the remedy at hand of effectual application. The superior orders are apt to despise and ridicule any honest endeavours to promote what is serious and good among them, whilst our equals care but little for our advice, and the Poor are really too ignorant to profit much by its occasional offers. For I am much inclined to impute a great deal of their insensibility in religious concerns to their total ignorance of those matters, rather than to any worse habits and dispositions in them than in their betters; an uncharitable point of view in which some people are ready to place them, but without justifiable grounds for their assertions. But you wished me to give you a regular and circumstantial account of my proceedings in a business, which by the benevolent concurrence of my parishioners I have been enabled to bring to a prosperous issue. It would be unjust to a very respectable and worthy Clergyman of Canterbury (Mr. Hearne) not to inform you, that the introduction of these schools into his parishes in Canterbury in January last (the very first in this county) furnished me with the hint of attempting the same. I wrote to that gentleman on the subject, who very freely communicated his plans * to me,

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and

* See a full account of these plans (as well as of the truly christian

and which I was happy to follow, as far as local circumstances permitted. The first thing to be provided was the essential means for their support, which made it necessary, as well as otherwise respectful and proper, to discover the sentiments and to sound the inclinations of the Gentlemen and other substantial people in the place on the introduction of such a plan. I was extremely happy not only to meet with a warm approbation of the design in general terms, but with a more substantial proof of concurrence in the promise of a liberal and annual subscription exceeding my expectations. Thus fortified with the means, my next business was to visit every house in the Parish where there were any children, and to propose my plan for their Sunday instruction; and as the rich were ready to contribute, so I must add for their credit that the poor seemed as gratefully to accept; so that I soon collected the names of about "four score children," whose parents thankfully accepted my offer. There only remained to provide proper teachers. I procured a man and his wife to attend and instruct all the children I should send to their house on a Sunday at "One Guinea and a Half per Quarter," and another woman in another district at "One Guinea per Quarter." These persons are constantly to appear with the children at church, where they have seats appropriated to themselves. All this being adjusted, I had a number of the following papers printed, stuck on the church doors and dispersed about.

" SUNDAY

christian and pastoral labors of this respectable Clergyman) in an Appendix to the Dean of Canterbury's Sermon on Sunday Schools, which was preached at Mr. Hearne's Church in Canterbury.

“ SUNDAY SCHOOLS

“ Supported by voluntary Subscription in the Parish
“ of Boughton-Blean, Kent, 1785.

“ The Points aimed at in the introduction of
“ Sunday Schools, are—to furnish opportunities of
“ instruction to the Children of the poorer part of
“ the parish without interfering with any industry
“ of the week-days ; and to inure children to early
“ habits of going to church and of spending the
“ leisure hours of Sunday decently and virtuously.
“ The children are to be taught to read and to be in-
“ structed in the plain duties of the Christian Re-
“ ligion, with a particular view to their good and
“ industrious behaviour in their future character of
“ Labourers and Servants. The extent of the plan
“ must be guided by the Subscription that may be
“ raised ; and all persons willing to encourage the
“ same, even by the smallest donations, are desired
“ to apply to the Rev. Charles Moore, Vicar.

“ REGULATION of the DAY.

“ When Service is in the Morning at Boughton,
“ the children are to meet at their school-room by
“ eight o'clock and to stay till ten, when they are
“ to go with their teacher to Church. After Ser-
“ vice they are to go to their respective homes, and
“ to meet again at the school by two o'clock ; and to
“ stay there till six in summer, or as long as day-
“ light will permit in winter. When service is in
“ the afternoon at Boughton, the children are to
“ meet as before by eight o'clock in the morning and
“ to stay till eleven, when they are to go home.—
“ They are to return to school by one o'clock and stay
“ till it is time to go to church. After Service they
“ are to return again with their teacher and to stay
“ till six o'clock as before, or as long as day-light
“ permits.

" N. B. *All that is expected of their parents is, that they send their children regularly to school, clean in their persons, (which costs nothing) and as decently clothed as their circumstances will permit.*"

(You know our Service here is alternate with Hearnhill; where a school has also since been established under the same regulations, and contains about thirty children.)

Our schools at Boughton were accordingly opened on May 1, when "seventy-eight" children, very decent and clean in their persons and apparel appeared in a body at Church with their teachers. Indulge me a moment in the pleasing recollection; it was a new and a grateful sight and will well bear reflection. I make a point of visiting the school most Sundays to see what children attend, and how they go on. Very few of the whole number can read at all, and many would never have been in the way of any instruction, but for some comprehensive plan of this sort. As I found no short prayers any where exactly applicable to this new scheme, I drew up the following to be got by heart and to be repeated in the schools.*

" A MORNING PRAYER *to be used by the Children attending the Sunday Schools.*

" O God! " who sufferest the little children
 " to come unto Thee and forbiddest them not,"
 " hearken unto our prayers, we most humbly beseech
 " Thee, and grant, that as we increase in years, so
 " we may increase in all goodness and piety. Make
 " us thankful for these opportunities of instruction
 " that

* These Prayers are printed separately from the Sermon, together with two short Morning and Evening Daily Prayers, and may be had at 1d. each, or 9d. per dozen.

" that are given us by the charity of our benefactors,
 " and make us desirous of improving such blessings to
 " the utmost of our power. For which purpose we
 " pray, that Thou wilt make us diligent and faith-
 " ful observers of all the good lessons we are taught;
 " and particularly we pray for thy grace to keep the
 " Lord's Day holy, never to take thy name in vain,
 " to abhor deceit and lying, to be chaste and sober,
 " honest and industrious: teach us to be dutiful to
 " thee, O God, above all things, and to be ever
 " fearful of offending against thy commandments.
 " Teach us to reverence thy holy word, to be grate-
 " ful and obedient to our superiors for all their
 " favours, to be affectionate and kind in our be-
 " haviour to one another. In a word, enable us,
 " O God, to be good children in all things, that so
 " we may grow up in the practice of every useful
 " and Christian virtue. All which we beg through
 " the merits and mediation of Jesus Christ, our
 " blessed Lord and Saviour. Amen."

" AN EVENING PRAYER on leaving the
 School.

" We thank Thee, O God, for the instruction
 " we have this day received, and for the opportunity
 " we have had of attending thy house and service.
 " Grant, that whatever good we have heard this
 " day with our outward ears, may be ingrafted
 " inwardly in our hearts, so as to bring forth in us
 " the fruits of practical virtue and piety through the
 " course of the ensuing week. Grant us health to
 " meet again on the next Lord's Day, to receive and
 " profit by further instruction. Bless all our re-
 " lations, friends and benefactors, and make us
 " ever sensible of, and thankful for the advantages
 " we enjoy above many others, who have the misfor-
 " tune to be bred up in the paths of ignorance, idle-
 " ness

*"ness and vice. O may we strive to deserve these
 "distinctions, and prove ourselves worthy of them.
 "Hear, O Lord, we beseech Thee, these prayers of
 "children, and hearken unto their humble petitions,
 "which are offered at the Throne of Heaven,
 "through Jesus Christ, our blessed Lord and Sa-
 "viour. Amen."*

All books are found for the use of the schools. Our little library for the current year (being as much variety as our finances would afford) consists of Prayer Books, Testaments, Spelling Books, Watts's first Set of Catechisms; the Tracts are, Christian Monitors, Stonehouse's Religious Instruction of Children, Sin and Danger of neglecting public Worship; all which (except Watts's Catechism) are to be had at easy rates by the Subscribers to the Society in London.* The former set of books are kept at the Schools, to be used only there and at Church, (except by way of indulgence to a good child) otherwise we should have new ones to find oftener than could be afforded. The other Tracts are designed as much for the use of the parents and other parishioners (in order to keep them up to the spirit of the plan) as of the children. Some of the children, therefore, carry home one or other of these every Sunday, which they are to bring back the following, and interchange with one another. Fresh books will

* The following books have since been added, viz.

- "Prayers for Sunday Schools (mentioned above)."
- "Parsons' Address to the Parents, and to the Children, attending Sunday Schools, at Wye, in Kent."
- "Woodward's Caution to Swearers."
- "Exercise against Lying."
- "Affectionate Address to the Poor on Drunkenness."
- "Mann's Exposition of Church Catechism."
- "Watts's Hymns."

will be introduced in course on the common vices of the poor ; but I thought these general ones best adapted for the encouragement of the design at first. When capable, they are to undergo little examinations in Church, and to have little rewards accordingly ; but we are not prepared for this yet. Our expences this year will amount to about "*Twenty Pounds*" but not so much another, as forms were to be purchased to accommodate the teachers, and a much larger quantity of books (which cost near Eight Pounds) was wanting at first setting out, than will be necessary again in the same year. Our annual subscription amounts to about Sixteen Pounds, which I think will do pretty well in future. This year we had extraordinary helps.

You know my parish here (though only a village) is pretty populous, having above one hundred and fifty houses in it, and abounds with poor. A great number of these can neither instruct their families themselves, nor are able to pay others for doing it : and though many of the well-disposed inhabitants select children here and there to put them to weekly schools, yet numbers are, and must be totally overlooked. These then are the first objects of Sunday Schools, though by no means to the exclusion of as many more as subscriptions will accommodate. As to age, five or six years old is quite early enough, and if the numbers were necessarily to be limited, I would not receive them before seven or eight. I have hitherto made no restriction of age, but admit all who offer, provided only their parents "*live in*" (no matter whether "*belong to*") the parish ; and I wish them to continue as long as they are inclined to stay, and behave well. If regulations
should

should hereafter be found requisite on this head, they must be made as circumstances direct; at present there is no need of limitation. The generality of the present number are between seven and twelve, not from any selection of my own, but because older ones are more unwilling to attend, and many circumstances intervene to prevent it, were they so disposed. I perfectly agree with you, that a most important age is from twelve to sixteen, or upwards; and that could they be retained in the due mixture of serious and religious exercises with their habits of industry, and in the regular observance of Sunday till that age, the impression would probably last in a great measure through life; whereas now it is sometimes apt to be overpowered from various causes before well settled. But about twelve years of age the condition of these poor children materially changes. A parent, though perhaps no extraordinary liver himself, is many times not unwilling to have his child taught what is good, and even to encourage his regularity of behaviour. But when once that child gets into a service (which he certainly ought to do as soon as he can) the case is altered. The generality of masters and mistresses (especially of the farming sort) pay little attention to any concerns of their servants but what appertains to their daily labour. The younger lads are soon laughed out of their little stock of decency, regularity and knowledge, by their older companions in the field and stable; neither does the scene among the female servants within doors afford us a more pleasing prospect. To so great a head of effrontery are farming servants arrived (though I must think it owing "*primarily*" to the bad examples and inattention

tention of the Masters themselves, who will submit to no temporary inconveniences for the discouragement of a wicked servant, nor "*unite*" in requiring a good moral character from the last person they served, which would have prevented much of the evil complained of) to such a height of impertinence (I say) they are arrived, that where a master is well inclined and regular himself, and would fain persuade his servants to be the same (especially on a Sunday) he is saucily replied to—" *I was hired to do your farming business, am I neglectful of that? but I was not hired to go to Church, nor will I, but when I like it.*" Such being the case, it would no doubt be an important improvement of the present plan of Sunday Schools, were it possible to extend them, by any means, to the care and instruction of "*grown*" children, from twelve to sixteen at least; and though there might be numberless difficulties attending it, yet something perhaps might be struck out of this kind, which if it did only "*a little good*" might be well worth a trial. Persons of this age must not be mixt with the younger set, nor the sexes with each other, neither should they be confined to the close attendance of a School. Were the masters, who employ them, well inclined themselves, and had the young people been previously so well instructed, as to be desirous of continuing in a state of sobriety and regularity, their attendance on necessary business at home might be so managed as to give them frequent, if not constant opportunities of appearing at Church, and of attending, perhaps, for "*One Hour*" on a Sunday Evening to some instructor, who, in the most easy and familiar manner, should read with, explain to, and question them, on the plainest

plaineſt and ſimpleſt points of morality and religion. But the greateſt difficulty would conſiſt in finding out proper instructors: the poorer ſort are, in general, incapable of the office, and the better would not undertake it; neither indeed could many pariſhes in the country (to which my ideas have been pretty much confined in this letter) be able to ſupport ſo much expence. Though therefore the plan of Sunday inſtruction is not ſo complete as it might be wiſhed, yet it extends perhaps as far as circumſtances will allow, at leaſt for the preſent. God grant it his bleſſing as far as it goes; and tho' we may be obliged to leave children to themſelves too early, yet ſurely it is better to leave them furniſhed with ſome ideas of what is good, rather than in a ſtate of total ignorance; which latter would be the caſe of numbers, who now attend Sunday Schools. Good principles will probably return and exert themſelves at ſome time or other, even though neglected at firſt; whereas the void of no principles at all is truly deplorable. I am therefore very thankful to my pariſhioners here for co-operating ſo cheerfully and ſubſtantially with my wiſhes as they have done—many a Clergyman is not ſo fortunate. No plan indeed of reformation ever ſeemed to meet with a more general and hearty approbation, wherever it is known. The Laity * are at leaſt as induſtrious in promoting it as the Clergy; a circumſtance, which
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* Particularly James Six, Eſq. of Canterburv; an account of whoſe Sunday Schools is to be ſeen in the Appendix to the Dean's Sermon.—In the ſame Appendix is likewiſe an account of the Reverend Mr. Parſons' Sunday School at Wye; and alſo a Letter from the Biſhop of Clonfert to Mr. Moore, relative to what his Lordſhip is doing in his Dioceſe in this matter.

in my opinion the Clergy ought thankfully to embrace. Away with narrow jealousies of interference, which I understand have subsisted in some places: let but good be done, no matter by whom. I do not know whether you saw an account in the papers lately of the assiduity of Bishop Law in Ireland, to establish these schools through his diocese of Clonfert, on the most liberal and comprehensive plan with respect to all sectaries. I hope the account was true. But to come nearer home and into our own county. The Dean and Chapter of Canterbury have taken up the cause as a body, and the example of Mr. Hearne, whose name I mentioned before as the first promoter in this county, has been followed by many other parishes in Canterbury. Steps are taken in Chatham for the same purpose, and the Clergy in and about Rochester are in general very desirous of their establishment. I hear likewise of several other places † in the country, where they are meditating their introduction; but that the Clergy and others have wanted information on the subject. This has swayed with me to venture on publication, which if it should prove of any service to the cause will make me very happy. I hazard its imperfections under the general utility and importance of the subject. It is possible we may have something soon from the respectable Mr. Jonas Hanway on these

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matters,

† The number of Schools is daily increasing in this County, and, no doubt, will be more so, in consequence of the Archbishop's warm recommendation of them to his Clergy, in his charge delivered at different places during his late primary Visitation of his Diocese. (July 1786) They have likewise been strongly recommended to the Clergy of the Diocese of Rochester, in a charge delivered by the Archdeacon this summer.

matters, as he has lately (I know) * wrote to the Mayor of Canterbury for the purpose of information. If such be the case, we shall no doubt receive much instruction for the general management and improvement of the plan from his well-informed and benevolent pen; and which perhaps will make all such writers as myself on the subject wish to shrink back into their original obscurity. With what satisfaction must Mr. Raikes of Gloucester view the progress of his humane and considerate scheme. May he yet live to see the good fruits of the virtue that is gone out from him!

You desired a very full and circumstantial account of this business, which is the only apology for this length of letter from

Your's, &c.

CHARLES MOORE.

Boughton Blean,
June 27, 1785.

* Mr. Hanway has since published under the title of "A Comprehensive View of Sunday Schools."

